

Jasper County left without its local senator

BY SARITA CHOUREY
Morris News Service

A presumed white supremacist's alleged gun massacre of nine people inside a historic black church in Charleston also stole impoverished Jasper County's homegrown champion in the state Senate.

Clementa Pinckney, a 41-year-old reverend and married father of two, was holding Bible study at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, when Dylann Roof, 21, allegedly shot him and eight others after sitting among them for an hour. State law requires a special election for Senate vacancies, and in this case, the candidate filing period begins July 3 and closes July 13. The special election will be held on Oct. 30. Technically the schedule is not official until the Senate President sets it. Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, is left to advocate without Pinckney for the rural county in the Senate.

Senate District 45 also



Grace Beahm/The Post and Courier via AP

The Rev. Clementa Pinckney is shown in November 2010 at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston.

spans parts of Allendale, Beaufort, Charleston, Colleton and Hampton counties. It's unlikely that Pinckney's successor will be a Jasper County resident like he was, a proud graduate of the Jasper County School District who remembers playing T-ball as a small boy and spoke of the lifelong friends and family who still live in Jasper County across the river from Georgia.

Some believe the House

lawmakers who live in the Senate district are the most likely to run in the special election. Although, none of them live in Jasper County, one of the state's poorest counties, which has about 27,000 people and is about 45 percent African American. In the last presidential election, 57 percent of Jasper County voted for President Obama.

And even among the three legislators whose districts

ON THE WEB

Go to savannahnow.com to read past stories covering Sen. Pinckney's career.

currently include Jasper County, the two Republicans live in Beaufort County to the east and the lone Democrat lives in Hampton County, Jasper's northern neighbor.

When asked about what's next for Jasper County's representation in the state Senate, a state Democratic Party official deferred to the S.C. Election Commission, which he said would likely be announcing a schedule this week.

Rep. Kenneth Hodges, D-Green Pond, who lives in Senate District 45, remained consumed with mourning on Monday.

"My only focus now is to grieve with the family and to pay respects to the senator and those who lost their

lives," said Hodges.

"So I am not contemplating anything right now, and I haven't heard anything yet," he said.

"But this week we will probably hear from some who may be interested."

Pinckney had served in the Senate since winning in 2000. Prior to that, McKinley Washington held the seat. Washington was elected in 1992 and had also served in the House, chairing the S.C. Legislative Black Caucus briefly. He lived in Ravenel, S.C., in Charleston County at the time and served as a minister in Hollywood and Edisto Island.

Attorney Peden McLeod of Colleton County represented Senate District 45 before Washington.

Pinckney was first elected to the Senate after defeating another black reverend, Curtis Brantley, who later served in the House of Representatives.

Pinckney was then reelected in 2004 and 2008

after running unopposed.

Four years later, a Republican candidate, Leilani Bessinger, challenged him.

Pinckney easily won reelection, 66 to 34 percent. But Bessinger then leveled a complaint against him, alleging that he was not a resident of the Senate district and objecting to his apparent lack of real estate ownership.

His lawyer at the time, Tanya Gee, characterized the Republican's residency challenge as an effort to harass him. During the hearing, Bessinger had probed for details about Pinckney's marital life and had sought to subpoena his cellphone records and his taxes dating back to 2008, along with his family members' tax records. She had also subpoenaed 18 people.

"She is essentially asking the Commission to launch into an investigation of Senator Pinckney's life," Gee told the commissioners.

After three hours, the commission voted 5-0 in Pinckney's favor.

Obama says U.S. racism 'not cured'

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama says the history of slavery and segregation is "still part of our DNA" in the United States, even if racial epithets no longer show up in polite conversation. He uttered the N-word in making his point.

In an interview, Obama talked about the debates over race and guns that have erupted after the arrest of a white man in the racially motivated shooting deaths of nine black church members in Charleston, South Carolina.

"Racism, we are not cured of it," Obama said. "And it's not just a matter of it not being polite to say nigger in public. That's not the mea-

sure of whether racism still exists or not. It's not just a matter of overt discrimination. Societies don't, overnight, completely erase everything that happened 200 to 300 years prior."

Obama's remarks came during an interview out Monday with comedian Marc Maron for his popular podcast, where coarse language is often part of the discussion. The president uttering a racial slur aloud stirred controversy, especially on social media, and White House spokesman Josh Earnest said later Monday that wasn't surprising.

The Associated Press

Tragedy a reminder of homegrown extremists

WASHINGTON — Confronting extremists, law enforcement in the U.S. has been focusing on aspiring jihadists who align with the Islamic State, overshadowing longstanding concerns about avowed racists, neo-Nazis and anti-government militias.

The South Carolina shootings, experts say, are a reminder of the persistent dangers posed by disaffected people who are bent on violence but whose statements before they act may skate below the radar of authorities.

The killings at a black church in Charleston appear to fit a grim pattern of violence fueled by hate-filled ideology, joining other attacks by

extremists in the past five years that have targeted Jewish and Sikh centers, federal government buildings and police officers.

While the number of Americans professing extremist ideologies fluctuates, the election of President Barack Obama, coupled with a national economic downturn, has in recent years intensified anger among white supremacists and anti-government groups to levels not seen since the time of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, said Mark Pitcavage, director of investigative research at the Anti-Defamation League.

The Associated Press

GOP candidates embrace S.C. gov's call on flag

WASHINGTON — Republicans with presidential aspirations rushed Monday to embrace South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley's call to remove the Confederate flag from the grounds of the state capitol, eager to move past a vexing issue that challenges the GOP's effort to win over the diverse coalition of voters it likely needs to win back the White House.

Haley gave her party's presidential candidates some much-desired political cover by calling for the banner's removal, reversing her own position and conceding that to many the flag is a "deeply offensive symbol of a brutally oppressive past."

Minutes later, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush tweeted out his agreement: "Kudos to @nikkihaley and all the SC leaders standing with her for doing the right thing." Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, Ohio Gov. John Kasich and Texas Gov. Rick Perry did the same.

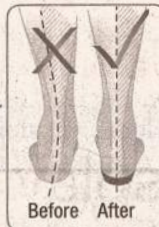
It was a sharp shift for the GOP's presidential class, which avoided taking such a firm position about the flag for several days following the slaying last week of nine black church members in Charleston. Walker was among the many who said it was a decision best left to those in South Carolina.

The Associated Press

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NOTICE OF LOCATION AND DESIGN APPROVAL

CSBRG-0007-00(128), CHATHAM COUNTY

P.I. NO 000718

Notice is hereby given in compliance with Georgia Code 22-2-109 and 32-3-5 that the Georgia Department of Transportation has approved the Location and Design of this project.

The date of location and design approval is: **June 19, 2015**

The project is located in Chatham County approximately 1/3 of a mile east of the city limit of Savannah. The project is located 100% within Chatham County and G.M.D. 5 and 100% within Congressional District 1.

Project with P.I. No. 0007128 in Chatham County represents the construction of two new, high level, fixed span, multi-lane bridges over the Wilmington River (Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway) approximately 0.3 mile east of the city limit of Savannah along Islands Expressway (CR 787) in Chatham County. The Project will replace the double bascule bridges that currently exist at this location, which are considered to be functionally obsolete. The Project will begin at a point approximately 0.6 mile west of the Wilmington River (mile log 3.71) and extend eastward to a point approximately 0.6 mile east of the Wilmington River (mile log 4.91). Project length is approximately 1.2 miles. The minimum vertical clearance under the new bridges at the Wilmington River channel will be approximately 65-ft above mean high water for vessels using the waterway. The total length of the proposed new bridges is approximately 1836-ft each.

Drawings or maps or plats of the proposed project, as approved, are on file and are available for public inspection at the Georgia Department of Transportation:

Joseph Capello, Area Engineer
jcapello@dot.ga.gov
Georgia Department of Transportation
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Any interested party may obtain a copy of the drawings or maps or portions thereof by paying a nominal fee and requesting in writing to:

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Any written request or communication in reference to this project or notice SHOULD include the Project and P.I. Numbers as noted at the top of this notice.

Ga. Supreme Court affirms 2013 murder conviction in Tatenville neighborhood

BY JAN SKUTCH
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The Georgia Supreme Court on Monday affirmed the 2013 murder conviction of a Savannah man in the 2011 slaying of Alan Dwayne O'Neal in the Tatenville neighborhood.

Levi Jerome Marshall Jr., 24, was convicted of malice murder in the June 21, 2011, slaying and sentenced to life in prison. He also was convicted on a charge of making false statements.

"The evidence was sufficient to authorize a rational trier of fact to find beyond a reasonable doubt that Marshall was guilty of the crimes of which he was convicted," the court ruled.

Savannah-Chatham police found O'Neal, 20, in the front yard of a home at 715 Dixon St. He had been shot and died later at Memorial University Medical Center.

Assistant District Attorney David Rhoden told jurors that O'Neal, who was armed while visiting a friend at the Dixon Street address, died in a sin-

gle volley of gunfire involving three weapons. He contended two bandits were involved in the attack. Marshall also was wounded in the exchange.

The prosecutor argued Marshall was looking for money to get his Chevrolet Camaro out of the pound, a possible motive for Marshall's actions.

Defense attorney Brian Daly argued the state's evidence did not support the murder conviction.

He conceded Marshall was guilty of making false statements to police.

Rules over lawn watering, car washing during next drought are OK'd

BY WALTER C. JONES
Morris News Service

ATLANTA — How brown your lawn and how dirty your car may be in the next drought will now be up to a set of comprehensive water-use rules approved last week by the Board of Natural Resources.

Issues California officials face every day during its current drought will be governed here by the new regulations.

Environmental groups say the rules give too much discretion to a political appointee who might be pressured to craft enforcement based on economic concerns or favoritism rather than science. But agribusiness groups say the rules are a fair compromise.

The Environmental Protection Division of the Department of Natural Resources considers the rule the successful result of many meetings with both sides, even if they took five years after passage of the law requiring them.

"The agency is pleased with the outcome of the rule-

making, and we think this is a good rule that will produce good results for our state," said Jac Capp, chief of the water protection branch.

The state will monitor climate conditions monthly using nationally accepted standards. The EPD director will use those reports to decide if particular regions qualify as a drought and the level of severity.

The director determines the boundaries of the effected regions, and the severity level determines how restrictive the rules are for water use. Conservation is voluntary at the lowest level. At the next stage, local water systems can choose what restrictions they place on their customers. At the highest level, the rules end automated outdoor watering and limit hand watering and food-plot irrigation to certain times of the day.

In the worst droughts, customers will be charged extra to encourage them to cut back on their indoor use as well.

The rules exempt industrial users and newly planted

landscaping.

Capp said the rules don't require the EPD director to consider economic impact when making a determination, but the agency is aware.

"There the logic is that a threat to water supply is a severe economic threat of its own," he said. "There certainly is an acknowledgment that there is some cost to comply."

Farm and landscape groups weren't happy with the original draft of the rules, or the statewide crackdown on water usage during the last drought, but they're content now.

"Since the last severe drought in 2007 and 2008, Georgians have proven themselves to be much more conscientious when it comes to outdoor water use," said Bryan Tolar, president of the Georgia Agribusiness Council. "These new rules provide much-needed guidance for times of drought, but also protective of the needs of plants when they are newly installed and most vulnerable to drought conditions."

Agencies respond to oil spill in river

Experts say food-grade palm oil no threat to wildlife

BY MARY CARR MAYLE
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An indeterminate amount of food-grade palm oil was spilled over the weekend from a tanker ship offloading at Vopak Terminal on the Savannah River just east of Georgia Ports Authority's Garden City Terminal, Savannah Riverkeeper Tonya Bonitatibus said Monday.

First responders, including Moran Environmental, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division and the U.S. Coast Guard are on the scene, she said. Some 5,000 feet of containment

boom has been stretched along the river's edge.

"The spill is mostly contained and the food-grade palm oil poses no toxicity risk to wildlife in the area," said U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Anthony Soto, adding that the Coast Guard is monitoring the clean-up efforts.

Bonitatibus was on the scene Monday afternoon and reported at least a half-dozen clean-up vessels on the water.

"We also plan to moni-

tor cleanup efforts to ensure the safety of the Savannah River and provide a voice for the people affected," she said. "This is a huge port and these things do happen. We would only ask that the boating public stay clear of the area for the next few days and give the first responders the room to do their job."





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630 W. Boundary Street
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Any interested party may obtain a copy of the drawings or maps or portions thereof by paying a nominal fee and requesting in writing to:

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Attn: David Moyer
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Georgia Department of Transportation
600 West Peachtree St, 25th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30308
Telephone (404) 631-1758

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Insurance companies must now provide coverage to families with autistic children

BY LAUREN MCDONALD
Morris News Service

ATLANTA — As of July 1, private insurance companies will provide coverage for the best therapeutic treatment for children with autism ages 6 and under, as a result of a new law.

Ava's Law, passed unanimously this year by the Georgia General Assembly, requires private insurance companies to cover Applied Behavior Analysis therapy for the first time in Georgia's history. Georgia became the 41st state to require coverage.

Faye Montgomery, advocacy director of the Matthew Reardon School for Autism in Chatham County, works with families to help find resources

and support and has been involved in the seven-year battle to get Ava's Law passed.

"A family who has a kid with autism and who has private insurance now can't be denied services that are medically necessary," she said. This includes services like speech therapy, which before could be denied coverage.

While Georgia lags behind most states in providing insurance coverage for early autism treatment, it's one of only three states that have created a statewide autism plan, funded through federal grants.

Research shows that treatment at an early age can reduce or even negate the effects, as well as reduce the overall cost of treatment during an individual's lifetime.

"(Therapy) is incredibly critical for anyone with autism," Montgomery said. "I think it's hard for anyone who doesn't live with someone with autism to understand what makes it so different and why ABA is so critical."

No standard price exists for ABA services, she said, even though Ava's Law sets the coverage cap at \$35,000.

Both Georgia's executive and legislative branches have also recently appropriated additional state funds to expand autism treatment options.

Over the past eight years, the Georgia General Assembly has continually increased the amount of state funds appropriated for nonprofit organizations that provide diagnosis,

care and treatment. The state provides \$4.2 million to nonprofit organizations, such as the Matthew Reardon School, a year-round school for autistic children.

It costs \$40,000 a year for the school to educate each student, said Patti Victor, the school's president and CEO. State and private funding allows the tuition to remain low enough for families to afford.

Doctors diagnose around one in 64 children in Georgia each year with autism spectrum disorder, which includes autistic disorder and Asperger syndrome. That's higher than the national average, which is one in 68 children.

"The thing that's really important for us, and a lot of

people in the autism world, is that [Ava's Law] has opened the door for insurance," Victor said.

Graham Thompson, executive director of the Georgia Association of Health Plans, said the employer community generally opposes state-mandated benefits, as those often lead to increases in premiums.

"They want increased flexibility to offer their employees the health insurance they need," he said.

Montgomery said access to early therapy continues to be difficult to find in Georgia.

"Up until now, unless a family had some money to come out of pocket to pay for it, there really was no access to it at all," she said.

And even though Ava's Law

has been passed, she said a lot of families still do not have private insurance and will not be covered because the law only applies to insurance companies selling policies. It doesn't include large employers who insure themselves. However, the state's insurance for government workers and teachers began including the coverage last year, before the law required it.

Victor said the law provides a "foot in the door" for future legislation.

"What's happens when the child turns 7?" she said. "From a long-term standpoint, an important part of Ava's Law is that it has put autism on the minds of people who have the ability to pass laws and to offer assistance."

Ethics

FROM PAGE 1A

Three weeks later, when the council reconvened to have a second reading of the bag ban ordinance May 14, the number of speakers standing up to oppose the measure had increased, and council members were less certain of the ordinance's enforceability. Rather than vote to implement the ordinance, they voted instead to delay the second reading for four months.


In the time since, some Tybee residents have lodged a complaint with the city's ethics commission, charging that between the first and second reading of the ordinance, Doyle violated the city's charter by using the resources of city staff to rouse opposition among Tybee business owners.

In the complaint notarized May 20, Freda Rutherford, Charles Matlock and David Turner said Doyle used the city's economic development authority's database of business contacts to ask business owners to show up and oppose the ordinance at second reading, a move they argued could be in violation city rules.

Provided with the complaint is a copy of an email from Doyle, forwarded May 8 from the city's development authority director to city businesses. The email included a copy of the proposed bag ban ordinance and the contact information for members of the city's Community Resource Committee.

"This is the group responsible for introducing this ordinance and trying to get it passed," Doyle wrote. "In an email that is being passed

ON THE WEB

 To view an ethics complaint filed against some Tybee Island officials last month and responses from the Mayor Pro Tem and City Clerk, go to savannahnow.com.

around by Freda Rutherford, it states that 'Tybee is Making History by being the first community in Georgia to ban plastic bags.' Is that what we want? The majority of the people I have talked to say 'NO.'"

Doyle went on to advocate instead for a plastic recycling program and encouraged those who opposed the ordinance to show up at the second reading.

In their complaint, the three residents asked the ethics commission to determine whether it was ethical for Doyle to direct City Clerk Jan LeViner to contact these business owners on her behalf, and if it was ethical for city staff to make contact with these merchants without first getting permission to do so from the city manager.

The complainants referred to a segment of the city charter that requires city council members to contact city employees through the city manager except in cases of inquiries or investigations. The complaint also lists provisions of the city's ethics ordinance, which prohibit city officials from using government property for unapproved activities; prohibits city staff from using city property for elected officials' personal purposes and blocks elected officials from using their position to require staff to perform work for the city's benefit without prior authorization.

Rutherford said by email her main concern and that of her fellow complainants

was whether Doyle's actions flew in the face of Tybee's city manager form of government. They filed a complaint, she said, because "Politicizing the city workforce will lower citizens' confidence in the integrity of Tybee's government and upcoming elections."

Doyle should have gotten the list of business owners from city staff, then contacted them herself, Rutherford said.

The ethics commission met to hear the complaint, but hasn't ruled on the questions posed by Rutherford, Matlock and Turner. Ethics Commission Chairman Danny Hill said city code allows for the subject of the complaint to respond on whether they agree a violation has occurred.

Since the initial meeting, LeViner and Doyle have both filed responses. Neither agrees a violation took place.

LeViner responded in a letter to Hill dated June 18 that she does not believe her actions were contrary to any city rules.

"My response, in short: I would not and have never engaged in any conduct which could or would compromise my ethical standards as set forth in the current Ethics Ordinance," the city clerk wrote, adding: "all of this activity was in quest of efficiency, and not to unethically benefit someone. The employees at City Hall endeavor to create an atmosphere of 'team work' by helping each other with questions and information."

A few days later, on June 22, Doyle responded that the email was distributed as an "official city email" from a Tybee council member. Doyle said the city clerk answers to the seven members of the council and questioned the argument that it was unethical for her to direct the clerk to distribute an email to city businesses.

"I would not engage in any conduct which would violate the ethical standards set for the in the Code of Conduct for elected officials," Doyle wrote. "I work for my constituents and owe it to them to provide as much information as possible on any subject matter coming before council or any other subject matter dealing with the City."

Doyle and LeViner declined to comment further.

Hill said by email that now the responses have been received, the ethics commission will meet again to discuss the matter.

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Flag

FROM PAGE 1A

The memories surfaced Monday, when the Senate began debating the bill, an event that drew national civil rights leader Jesse Jackson to the South Carolina Capitol.

The flag was raised in the 1960s as a way to protest the civil rights movement, and only 15 years ago lawmakers reached a compromise that moved the flag from the Statehouse dome to the grounds.

On Monday, Sheheen also shared an email he'd received after nine African-Americans, including state Sen. Clementa Pinckney, were gunned down in their Charleston church, allegedly by a white supremacist.

Days after the massacre last month, the woman emailed Sheheen to tell him the shooting was not related to the Confederate flag.

"It's about the entitlement given to minorities, and folks are getting tired of it," she wrote.

Dylann Roof, the white

21-year-old who has been charged with nine counts of murder, was found to be posing with the Confederate flag in photos.

Lawmakers acknowledged it was OK for individuals to perceive the flag in vastly different lights.

Even the outcome of the Civil War was viewed according to one's race, said one lawmaker.

Sen. Darrell Jackson, D-Richland, said that in 1860, South Carolina's population was 57 percent black.

"As far as they were concerned, they won the war," because they were set free, he said.

Sen. Lee Bright, R-Spartanburg, has been one of the strongest defenders of the Confederate flag. On Monday he tried to convince his colleagues to put the question to a non-binding voter referendum. But the amendment failed.

Bright said the climate was emotionally charged in the wake of the church massacre.

"I'm more against taking it down in this environment than any other time,"

he said. "I believe that we're placing the blame of what one deranged lunatic did, on people that hold their Southern heritage high, and I don't think that's fair."

Sen. Danny Verdin, R-Laurens, had sided with Bright, whose floor speech also included statements against abortion rights, gay marriage and other topics.

"I think we'd do well to listen (not just to boardrooms) but to hearth and home" of the citizens, said Verdin.

But after the amendment fell, Verdin offered his own to allow the flag to be hoisted on Confederate Memorial Day, May 10. It, too, fizzled.

Sen. Harvey Peeler, R-Cherokee, along with Verdin and Bright made up the "no" votes on S. 897.

Peeler said removing the flag wouldn't change history and compared it to taking a tattoo off a corpse in order to change the deceased's obituary.

Similar proposals to remove the divisive banner have been introduced in the House. The pending third vote by the Senate on S. 897 is considered ceremonial.

CHATHAM COUNTY

GEORGIA

1777

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CSBRG-0007-00(128), CHATHAM COUNTY

P. I. NO 000718

Notice is hereby given in compliance with Georgia Code 22-2-109 and 32-3-5 that the Georgia Department of Transportation has approved the Location and Design of this project.

The date of location and design approval is: **June 19, 2015**

The project is located in Chatham County approximately 1/3 of a mile east of the city limit of Savannah. The project is located 100% within Chatham County and G.M.D. 5 and 100% within Congressional District 1.

Project with P.I. No. 0007128 in Chatham County represents the construction of two new, high level, fixed span, multi-lane bridges over the Wilmington River (Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway) approximately 0.3 mile east of the city limit of Savannah along Islands Expressway (CR 787) in Chatham County. The Project will replace the double bascule bridges that currently exist at this location, which are considered to be functionally obsolete. The Project will begin at a point approximately 0.6 mile west of the Wilmington River (mile log 3.71) and extend eastward to a point approximately 0.6 mile east of the Wilmington River (mile log 4.91). Project length is approximately 1.2 miles. The minimum vertical clearance under the new bridges at the Wilmington River channel will be approximately 65-ft above mean high water for vessels using the waterway. The total length of the proposed new bridges is approximately 1836-ft each.

Drawings or maps or plats of the proposed project, as approved, are on file and are available for public inspection at the Georgia Department of Transportation:

Joseph Capello, Area Engineer

jcapello@dot.ga.gov

Georgia Department of Transportation

630 W. Boundary Street

Savannah, GA 31401

Telephone (912) 651-2144

Any interested party may obtain a copy of the drawings or maps or portions thereof by paying a nominal fee and requesting in writing to:

Albert V. Shelby III

ashelby@dot.ga.gov

Attn: David Moyer

dmoyer@dot.ga.gov

Office of Program Delivery

Georgia Department of Transportation

600 West Peachtree St., 25th Floor

Atlanta, Georgia 30308

Telephone (404) 631-1758

Any written request or communication in reference to this project or notice SHOULD include the Project and P.I. Numbers as noted at the top of this notice.

NAACP joins call for probe of North Charleston Police

BY BRUCE SMITH
The Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. — NAACP leaders are joining the call for a federal investigation of the North Charleston Police Department, echoing what local activists have been seeking since the shooting death of an unarmed black man by a white officer more than three months ago.

Sherrilyn Ifill, the president of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, wrote U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch on Monday seeking a federal investigation of both the department and into the April shooting of Walter Scott.

Former North Charleston officer Michael Slager was indicted last month on a murder charge and faces 30 years to life in prison if

convicted in Scott's death. Slager fired as Scott tried to run away from a traffic stop in North Charleston on April 4. A bystander recorded the shooting on a dramatic cellphone video, fueling the debate about how white officers treat black people across the nation.

The Justice Department already is investigating whether there were civil rights abuses in Scott's death. But Ifill's letter seeks a wider investigation into what it calls racially-biased policing in the city.

The letter to the attorney general was also signed by more than 30 others, including six South Carolina state lawmakers.

Spencer Pryor, a spokesman for the city police department, said in a statement that the city "strongly disagrees with the character-

ization of the police department" in the letter and "feels a Justice Department inquiry is not warranted."

The letter said "the fatal shooting of Mr. Scott exposed to this nation another example of racially-biased policing and excessive use of force that has long existed in North Charleston."

It listed eight examples of what it said were excessive use of force by North Charleston officers during the past decade. Six of those incidents involved blacks.

The letter noted the Confederate battle flag was removed from the grounds of the South Carolina Statehouse in Columbia last week.

"While this is a welcome act, merely removing a flag long recognized as a symbol of racial hatred and intolerance will not eliminate racially-based policies and

practices that have permeated policing in North Charleston," Ifill wrote.

The flag was removed following the killings of nine black church members during a Bible study in Charleston last month. Police have arrested a white man who had posed with Confederate flags and have called it a hate crime.

In the days following Scott's shooting, local civil rights leaders called for a federal investigation into all shootings involving law officers in Charleston County going back more than two decades.

They said at the time they don't have faith in the local police, prosecutor or the State Law Enforcement Division to conduct such an investigation and want a federal review of such cases dating back to 1994.

S.C. DNR: Slow truck in front of you could be recording bats

BY SARITA CHOUREY
Morris News Service

COLUMBIA — Researchers are eavesdropping on bats.

In actuality, they are driving specific routes two consecutive nights with a recording device mounted on their trucks. The 20-mile routes must be driven at 20 mph to capture the data. The recordings are then analyzed to determine which species of bats were recorded and how abundant they were.

But the general public can help, too.

"Motorists are advised to please be patient if you end up driving behind one of these surveys," said a news release from the S.C. Department of Natural Resources.

"If researchers stop to let you pass, or deviate from 20 mph, it disrupts the data collection, potentially ruining the entire night's work."

The Carolinas Acoustic Bat Project is happening in South Carolina and North Carolina with funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Other partners include the S.C. DNR, Clemson University, the U.S. Forest Service Southern Experimental Station and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Bats are a crucial component of ecosystems, serving as the primary predators of night-flying insects, such as various crop and forest pests. But the furry mammals face threats of their own. The White-Nose Syndrome, for instance has led to significant declines in hibernating bats.

"Bats are notoriously difficult to study," said Clemson University graduate student

Ben Neece, in the DNR's news release.

"Because they are active at night, (bats) can detect nets and traps, and, of course, they can fly and often are fairly secretive when roosting."

He said most of their vocalizations elude human ears without the use of electronic equipment, so the acoustic survey routes will allow researchers to monitor them.

Mary Bunch, wildlife biologist and bat expert with the S.C. DNR said officials hope to establish truck routes and possibly add more routes in areas that haven't been surveyed.

She said the program could eventually offer a volunteer opportunity for citizen scientists.

A S.C. DNR report issued in February to address White-nose Syndrome said that mortality rates attributed to the disease killed more than 5.7 million bats in North America since it was first documented in New York during the winter of 2006 and 2007. The disease has now spread through the northeastern, mid-Atlantic and Midwest states, and eastern Canada. South Carolina's first documented case was in Pickens County in 2013.

In a news release, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said the acoustic bat survey is a priority for the groups involved, given the damage at hand from the fungal disease.

"A variety of imperiled bat species will benefit from modeling analyses allowing partners to establish regional population objectives for focused conservation actions," states the federal agency.



Karson Hoagland/Savannah Morning News

People gather at the Sentient Bean for Monday Means Community to talk about the city's noise ordinance Monday night.

Noise

FROM PAGE 1A

"It's a big scene, but it's a small town. There are only so many places to play," she said. "If there isn't a place for folks to play, they're going to go away."

Reed agreed that the city is not currently addressing modern-day Savannah, and called the ordinance "draconian."

"Savannah has always had this kind of left-handed compliment thing with music," Reed said. "I have no problem saying Savannah doesn't value it enough."

One of the suggestions by Bell was that buildings could restructure to include soundproofing. He cited World of Beer as an example other businesses could follow. The business soundproofed its ceiling in courtesy of the lofts above and has since not received any complaints.

Rose, however, said it isn't always feasible to remodel older buildings.

"We're in a historic city," he said. "Every historic structure that has wooden windows from the 1800s cannot be replaced. You would have to do something ugly on the inside, which then becomes a problem."

Rose took time Monday before the gathering to record decibel levels around locations downtown. He said that there was a long list of everyday, non-live music things that violated the city's noise ordinance — including Girls Scouts at the

Tomochichi monument.

What this means, he said, is that "the ambient noise outside is higher than the noise that is going on inside."

Throughout the discussion, Bell said the city was amenable to revisiting the ordinance.

"It sounds like the standards need to be upgraded,

and I think we're open to that," Bell said.

The overall consensus of the group was summed up by Chandler: "There needs to be a second look at the ordinance in 2015. Our music scene is very vibrant right now, and we need to take that into account."

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Residents asked to avoid Skidaway Road at 50th Lane

Skidaway Road at 50th Lane/Alley will be reduced to one lane from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday to install a new water line. Residents are asked to avoid this area if possible to avoid congestion.

Savannah Morning News



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